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COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 197th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 21 April 1993, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman:

Mr. CISSE

(Senegal)

CONTENTS

Adoption of the agenda

Report by the Chairman on the meeting of the Bureau of the Committee with the President of the Security Council (24 March 1993)

Report by the Chairman on the Preparatory Meeting for the Tenth United Nations International NGO Meeting on the Question of Palestine, Geneva, 5-6 April 1993

United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People, UNESCO, Paris, 26-29 April 1993

Other matters

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The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

1. The agenda was adopted.

REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN ON THE MEETING OF THE BUREAU OF THE COMMITTEE WITH THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL (24 MARCH 1993)

2. The CHAIRMAN said that the Bureau had held a meeting with the President of the Security Council to discuss its concerns over the grave situation in the occupied territories and the sending of a letter to the Secretary-General and the President of the Council on that subject. In view of the inaction of the Council, the Bureau had called for the publication of the Secretary-General's report regarding the refusal of Israel to comply with Council resolution 799 (1992), and had explained to the President its reasons for the letter. The President had promised to refer the matter to the Council forthwith. At the same time, other initiatives had been taken to reactivate the Palestinian issue in the Council by, inter alia, the Group of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. The Committee was bound to take a close interest in the fate of the more than 400 Palestinians unjustly deported by Israel, and to convey its severe condemnation of that action to the Council. While it was hoped that all the deportees would return to their homes, it was felt that periodic contacts between the Bureau of the Committee, the Security Council and the Secretariat were useful in order to clarify the position of the Committee and to establish a dialogue. The intention was therefore to continue such actions and to extend them to other parties from which active support might be expected.

3. The Bureau should therefore intensify its contacts with such bodies as the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the League of Arab States and the Organization of African Unity in order to keep them well informed of the situation in Palestine. He appealed to the secretariat of the Division for Palestinian Rights for assistance to that end. As members of one or more of those bodies, many members of the Committee could also play a useful role. The documents produced or collected by the Division should be given the widest possible distribution and circulated systematically to the executive heads of the above-mentioned bodies. The Committee should also be more responsive to the invitations received from them by sending, whenever possible, delegations with up-to-date documentation in order to help to draft pertinent resolutions on Palestine. The Committee was called upon to follow new developments in the Palestinian issue closely and to take bold new initiatives. It should not remain content merely to pass resolutions and hold seminars, but rather should make its presence more keenly felt not only by its supporters, but also by those who had reservations with regard to it. The financial resources available to the Committee should enable it to send missions, when necessary, to speak directly to Governments and other interested bodies. He requested the Bureau to examine those matters and to make concrete proposals to enhance the work of the Committee.

4. Mr. FARHADI (Afghanistan) said that his delegation was a staunch supporter of the Committee's efforts, and commended its initiative in contacting the President of the Security Council. Afghanistan was very much in favour of

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(Mr. Farhadi, Afghanistan)

periodic contacts with the various bodies mentioned. The Committee should remain in close touch with new developments concerning Palestine and keep the Security Council and other bodies informed thereof. The Chairman's report contained several important concrete proposals, which he hoped would be made available in written form.

5. Mr. HIDALGO-BASULTO (Cuba) thanked the Chairman for his succinct and precise summary of the very useful meeting with the President of the Security Council. He welcomed the Chairman's timely initiatives and was confident that the Committee could indeed usefully expand its contacts. He therefore supported the Chairman's proposals.

6. Mr. AL-KIDWA (Observer for Palestine) thanked the Chairman and the Committee for their meeting with the President of the Security Council. He hoped that such contacts would be developed in the future. Despite the Chairman's contacts and despite the official request by the Chairman of the Group of Arab States for a meeting of the Security Council to consider the grave situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, and the support for that request by many countries, including the members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, no such meeting had been held. That seemed to be the general procedure prevailing in the Council with respect to the Palestinian question, as well as other issues such as Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Palestinian question thus provided a new opportunity to examine procedures in the Council in order to improve its working methods. He appreciated the Chairman's remarks aimed at revitalizing the political and practical role of the Committee. In particular, he supported the two specific proposals contained in the report, which he hoped would be distributed.

7. The CHAIRMAN said that the report would be made available, as requested by the representative of Afghanistan and the Observer for Palestine.

REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN ON THE PREPARATORY MEETING FOR THE TENTH UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL NGO MEETING ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE, GENEVA, 5-6 APRIL 1993

8. The CHAIRMAN said that at the Meeting, preparations had also been made for the Seventh United Nations European Regional NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine. The Meeting had been attended by representatives of the International Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine (ICCP) and the European Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine (ECCP).

9. Working paper No. 3 contained the provisional programme for the Tenth United Nations International NGO Meeting on the Question of Palestine, to be held at Geneva or Vienna from 25 to 27 August 1993. ICCP had requested that the theme of the Meeting should be "Renewing the United Nations NGO commitment to Palestinian national and human rights". The working paper referred to the five plenary sessions proposed for the Meeting and listed the panellists and speakers who had been invited to attend each session. No specific request had yet been made for workshops; the number and topics of the workshops would be determined subsequently. The Committee was requested to approve the provisional programme for the Meeting, including the names of the panellists proposed, on the

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(The Chairman)

understanding that additional names might be proposed to the Committee at a later stage.

10. Working paper No. 4 contained the provisional programme for the European NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine to be held at Geneva on 23 and 24 August 1993. Its theme would be "The Middle East peace process: Palestinian rights and development - A challenge to Europe". Only one plenary session had been requested, to which four speakers had been invited. It was proposed that two workshops should be held simultaneously on the first day of the Symposium. The Committee was requested to approve the provisional programme and the names of the panellists and resource persons, on the understanding that additional names might be proposed to the Committee at a later stage. The Bureau and the Division for Palestinian Rights would remain in close contact with the NGO Coordinating Committees with regard to the eminent personalities to be invited. The Division would ascertain the availability of all the suggested panellists and resource persons. Provisions had been made for the United Nations to bear the expenses of 15 invitations to the International Meeting and 6 invitations to the European Symposium. During the Preparatory Meeting, the delegation of the Committee and the Acting Chief of the Division had held useful consultations with the Chairmen and members of ICCP, ECCP and the other Coordinating Committees regarding future activities and coordination.

11. He took it that the Committee wished to approve working papers Nos. 3 and 4.

12. It was so decided.

UNITED NATIONS SEMINAR ON ASSISTANCE TO THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE, UNESCO, PARIS,
26-29 APRIL 1993

13. The CHAIRMAN said that the programme for the United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People, which would be held at UNESCO headquarters in Paris from 26 to 29 April 1993, was contained in working paper No. 2.

14. He took it that the Committee wished to approve working paper No. 2.

15. It was so decided.

16. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee delegation to the Seminar would be composed of the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman, the Rapporteur and the Permanent Observer for Palestine. Consultations were still being held to ascertain whether another ambassador might be able to join the Committee delegation for that event.

17. Mr. FARHADI (Afghanistan) said that the members of the Committee should assist countries that did not have missions in Paris or permanent representation in UNESCO to attend the Seminar.

18. Mr. NASIER (Indonesia) said that the President of Indonesia had been invited to attend the Seminar in his capacity as current Chairman of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. He hoped to be able to inform the Committee

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(Mr. Nasier, Indonesia)

of the President's response by the end of the week. He inquired whether it would be possible for the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries to make a general statement at the Seminar.

19. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee would be pleased to hear a statement by the delegation of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, which would also have the opportunity to make statements during the Seminar.

OTHER MATTERS

20. Mr. AL-KIDWA (Observer for Palestine) said that, at the 196th meeting of the Committee, his delegation had reviewed the results of the visit by the United States Secretary of State, Mr. Warren Christopher, to the Middle East, and had informed the Committee of the six points of agreement that had been arrived at by the Palestinian and American sides. Since that meeting, two Palestinian delegations had visited Washington: the first had been headed by Faisal Husseini and the second by Haider Abdel Shafi. The second delegation had been in Washington at the same time as a number of Arab delegations that were holding preliminary consultations with the United States Administration on the question of a political settlement. Palestine had also had contacts with the Russian Federation, and its contacts with the Chairman of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries had resulted in the planning of a meeting of the Committee of Nine on Palestine.

21. The United States side had put forward a number of proposals, such as the idea that the Palestine Liberation Organization should be a full partner in the negotiating process. The United States Administration had also expressed its readiness to accept Mr. Faisal Husseini as a member of the Palestinian delegation. The Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, Mr. Edward Djerejian, had made a number of promises, including the return of Palestinian deportees to the occupied territories.

22. On 16 April 1993, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Egypt had held a meeting to discuss the Arab position on the question, and had concluded that it was not possible to resume the negotiations at the appointed time; that position had been made known to the Consulate General of the United States of America in Jerusalem.

23. On 17 April, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs had agreed to suspend the meeting and go to Cairo to participate in the meeting of the Council of Arab Ministers for Foreign Affairs. The meeting had been held on 18 April at the headquarters of the League of Arab States and had led to some improvements in inter-Arab relations.

24. On 19 April, President Yasser Arafat had visited Cairo, where he had met with the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Egypt, the Egyptian President's adviser on political matters, as well as a number of other Arab Ministers for Foreign Affairs. President Arafat had then travelled to Latakia, Syria Arab Republic, to meet with President Hafez-al-Assad, with whom he had reviewed the overall situation.

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(Mr. Al-Kidwa, Observer, Palestine)

25. On 20 April, the Palestine leadership had held a meeting in Amman under the chairmanship of President Arafat and with the participation of a large number of Palestinian officials, including members of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization. It had been difficult to reach a final decision on participation in the negotiations in view of the largely negative position of the Palestinian population of the occupied territories.

26. The final decision had been taken on the morning of 21 April. At a press conference held in Damascus, President Arafat had declared that Palestine agreed to participate in the ninth round of negotiations, which would begin on 27 April. Immediately after that statement, the four Arab States participating in the peace process had adopted a decision to the same effect.

27. His delegation expected that the United States Administration would fulfil all of the promises it had made, and it also expected a substantive change in Israel's attitude.

28. As it prepared for the ninth round of negotiations, his delegation hoped that it would have broad international support, including the support of the Committee.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.